

JOSHUA

Week Five

As Christian Faith Advances, the More Vocal the Opposition Becomes

Significant truths:

Chapter 8

1. God does not always use the same strategy to accomplish His will.

The strategy used to destroy Ai was entirely different from that employed at Jericho. The Israelites did not march around the walls of Ai, nor did the walls miraculously fall. God directed Israel to conquer Ai through normal combat. It is important for us to know that as we approach ministry, combat spiritual battles, or follow God in whatever endeavor, there is no set pattern of how God works. We should not expect God to work in the same way or lead us always the same way. We need to be open and sensitive to the various ways God may lead. As the Sovereign God of the universe, He is never limited to one particular method to accomplish His purposes. Sometimes God will work in ways that are miraculous. Other times, He will work through natural means and methods, but behind it all is the sovereign working and care of the Lord.

Chapter 9

2. Walk by faith, not by sight.

Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:7 says that we “are to walk by faith, not by sight.” To walk by faith is to walk in a spirit of prayerful dependence on the Lord and His guidance. Also, James encourages us, “If anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). We are always to seek God’s wisdom because we need His omniscient and sovereign guidance no matter what the issue is that faces us. But what happens when we walk by sight. The Old Testament is a clear testimony of what takes place when we walk by sight. Jeremiah declared, “Lord, I know that people’s lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps” (Jer. 10:23). Man does not have the wisdom or ability, nor often the will to direct his way for “There is a way which seems right to man. But its end is the way of death: (Prov. 14:12) So, it is fitting that the book of Joshua is followed by the book of Judges in which man continuously moved from walking in faith to walking by sight, the way which seemed right in one’s own eyes.

The danger of walking by sight is increased considerably when we consider the fact, we live in an age of old conflict with supernatural forces that are extremely cunning and many times more powerful than we are. We see the material world and all we desire, but we fail to see the cunning and deceptive schemes of Satan, who seeks to destroy us and our relationship with God. In Chapter 9, we see the danger of failing to commit their way to the Lord, the peril of prayerlessness and the peril of walking by sight, by what appears right in the eyes of man.

It is important for us to remember that after a spiritual victory, we are most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks. It is at this time that we must walk circumspectly knowing that Satan is prowling around and most likely to attack because he knows we are prone to trust in our experiences rather than in the Lord. Overconfidence leads to complacency which leads to vulnerability.

3. The more boldly the Christian faith advances, the more vocal and violent the opposition will become.

The record given in Chapter 9 is typical of Satan's strategies. Powerful alliances began immediately to form in both the north and the south of Canaan. Where tribal warfare had gone on for years, suddenly deadly enemies were brought together in alliances as they united against the invasion of God's people into the land. When righteousness becomes aggressive and bent on an objective, it has a way of uniting the enemies of righteousness. It happened this way when Jesus launched his earthly ministry. His aggressive ministry of healing, preaching, and the confrontation of sin galvanized his own followers – but it also welded together three groups which had formerly been enemies, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. Always be alert because Christianity when advanced will be met with tremendous opposition. When we have victories know that Satan will double his efforts. We must cloth ourselves with our spiritual armor as given us in Christ and stay faithful to the Word of God, praying for God's intervention.

4. God in His grace not only forgives, but in many cases, He will turn a curse into a blessing.

The Gibeonites deceived Joshua and the Israelites. It created quite a conundrum for the people of God resulting in distrust toward the leaders, confusion over the covenant made with the Gibeonites and arguments over punishment to be inflicted on the Gibeonites. Joshua rebuked them for their dishonesty and then sentenced them to perpetual slavery. The Gibeonites became woodcutters and water-bearers for the Israelites, especially in relation to the tabernacle service. In God's grace, this turned out to be a great blessing. To keep the Gibeonites' idolatry from defiling the true faith of Israel, their work would be carried out in the tabernacle, where they would be exposed to the worship of the one true God. As a result, the very thing the Gibeonites hoped to retain – their freedom – was lost. But the curse eventually became a blessing. It was on behalf of the Gibeonites that God eventually worked a great miracle (Josh. 10:10-14). Later the tabernacle of the Lord would be pitched at Gibeon, and the Gibeonites (later known as Nethinims) would replace the Levites in temple service. God truly forgives, and through His grace, He will bless even those who were once the focus of His wrath.

Questions and Discussion:

- Do you spend time praying and seeking God's will, before you take action? Do you have a perspective of how you expect God to work in your life, or do you follow His lead regardless of how that might be? Have you ever experienced a miraculous encounter with God?
- What does it mean to walk by faith, rather than by sight? What steps do you take to maintain a steady and faithful walk with God?
- Have you experienced success that is followed by attacks from Satan? Are you on the alert for Satan's schemes and his cunning ways or do you feel that your relationship with God is strong enough that it is not necessary? Is there danger lurking, when we become too confident in our relationship with God?
- Do you feel that Christians remain silent because they know that when they come forward they will be met with vocal and often times violent opposition? How can we step out in the face of this vocal opposition? Should we or should we stay quiet to keep the peace?
- Does anyone have a story they can share about how God turned a curse into a blessing?